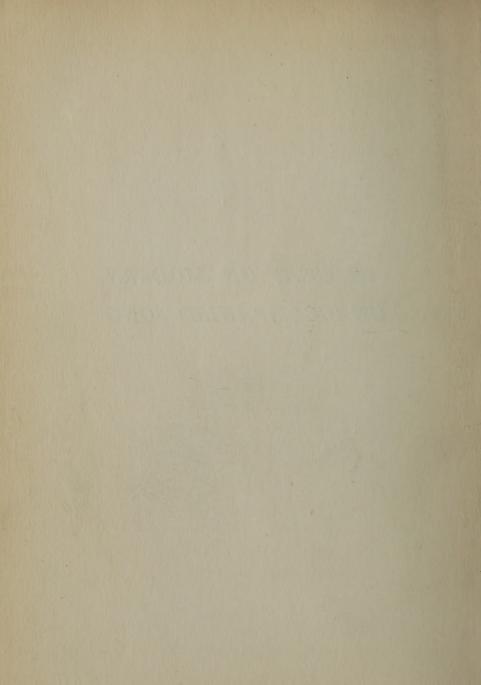


## AN ESSAY ON MODERN UNACCOMPANIED SONG



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Oxford Musical Essays

## AN ESSAY ON MODERN UNACCOMPANIED SONG

By HERBERT BEDFORD

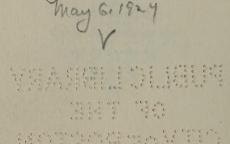


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## INTRODUCTION

## The Aim of Modern Unaccompanied Song and its Musical Idea

I BEGIN this Essay with two definitions, that of the aim of modern unaccompanied song, and that of the idea involved in its construction. Its aim, then, is to be a sensitive re-utterance of poetry in a new medium; and the musical idea involved in its construction is a supple vocal line, complete in itself, able to create its own atmosphere, containing its own ornament, and composed in such a way as to be dependent upon no external

harmonic explanation.

It is one of our modest and at the same time bad habits, to think disparagingly of the age in which we live, and to dismiss it as being artistically an age of transition, an age of experiment. The quidnuncs are apt to dismiss modern unaccompanied song as an experiment and nothing more. No doubt it begins by being an experiment; and one may well be content to accept the epithet, not as the condemnation intended to be conveyed in it, but rather as an encouragement: for not only is this age an age of experiment, but every other age also; indeed were there no experiments there would be little beyond mere repetition, and consequently no progress; and the great river of art without progress would become stagnant water.

'Modern unaccompanied song', wrote Clarisse Speed, 'has come to stay, because it is in the line of evolution.' Let us, then, proceed to inquire into the idea of modern unaccompanied song, and to glance at the present position of the accompaniment with which it dispenses. We will then consider the musical essentials of unaccompanied song, and some aspects of its interpretation; regarding it from the several points of view of the poet, the

composer, the singer, and, lastly, the audience.

Since the invention of monodia some three hundred and fifty years ago the possibilities offered by the human voice in conjunction with other musical instruments have been freely and adventurously explored, and wonderful and beautiful are the results that have been achieved. In an article in *The Times H. C.* Colles wrote:

The singer still thinks and feels words and music together. . . . Granted that the interplay of many rhythms and melodies called counterpoint, the stresses of simultaneous sounds called harmony, the contrasting timbres of voices and instruments are not ends in themselves, but means, they are nevertheless means not towards poetry's end, but towards music's.

Indeed, within the same period the possibilities offered by the singing voice in combination with nothing beyond the poet's words have apparently been overlooked; but that is surely no reason for

their remaining neglected.

In modern unaccompanied song music is no longer the predominant partner; for, recognizing that the poem is the basis, the composer aims not solely at the creation of music apposite to it, illustrative of it; not the creation of an independent musical entity to be attached to, even though welded to, the original poem; his aim is the re-utterance of the poem in a new medium that consists of words-in-music, syllables-in-music, interacting, the one upon the other, verbally, musically, ideally; the verbal beauty, no less than the beauty of idea, remaining manifest in the new medium of expression.

To people who have lived a few years in the East the mere words 'unaccompanied song' conjure up in the mind pictures of the places and surroundings in which they have heard it, for in the Orient unaccompanied singing has been through many

centuries recognized as one of the fine arts.

The inherent differences between the intervals of the scales used in the East and West have, however, formed a barrier sufficiently formidable to preclude up to the present time anything in the way of a general overlapping of the two styles, and

## How it differs from Concerted Song

I am therefore considering oriental unaccompanied song as not

falling within the scope of this essay.

I have met people whose thoughts, at the first mention of modern unaccompanied song, instantly turned towards folk-song, though there is no intimate connexion between the two types of unaccompanied song; and there are yet others for whom the idea of unaccompanied singing finds no other response in the brain than the recollection of some solitary figure of a mendicant minstrel of the street corner; unless, indeed, it be that of his more elaborate brother, lugubrious of aspect and armed with a wife. This latter type, one remembers, instead of developing some eligible singing-site on the curbstone, prefers to maintain a perpetual slow march down the middle of the street, making life miserable for everybody within range.

Setting aside these various preconceived views, let us proceed with our inquiry into the ideas that have brought about the

present movement.

Let us realize at the outset that modern unaccompanied song is not merely the voice-part of any accompanied song, robbed of its natural accompaniment—set to shiver on the concert platform stripped of its accustomed garment. It is, in fact, something musically different: it is composed with the deliberate intention in the mind of the composer of its single vocal line being complete in itself without the harmonic assistance or the commentary of an accompaniment, imagined, indeed, complete, in the composer's mind, without one. Now song-in-a-single-line is one thing, and concerted or accompanied song is something different, composed in a different medium, expressed by a different technique, to be listened to in a different way. Yet the two are not mutually antagonistic; indeed, in practice, each of them is the gainer by association with the other, and by being contrasted with it.

This movement has been written of as being an escape from 'the most beautiful tyranny ever imposed upon the art of music'; and, again, it is freely described as a protest against the overloading of modern accompaniment. But while it may conceivably

serve either of these ends, its real idea is neither that of escape nor of protest; it is nothing negative, but something more than that, it is something definitely positive, neither challenging comparison with any other branch of art, nor leaning upon it for

explanation.

Before proceeding further we will glance at the reason for our friends' confounding modern unaccompanied song with folk-song. It undoubtedly arises from the fact that in the past the songs sung without accompaniment have always been folk-songs, and for the sufficient reason that there were no others that were intended to be so sung. But even folk-songs are not generally sung without accompaniment to-day; indeed not a few musicians have been at pains to fit them with accompaniments: to some they give fits, to others misfits. Some of their arrangers have introduced old melodies to modern harmonies, the result being that no simple song that they arrange

But doth suffer a sea-change Into something rich and strange.

# Accompaniment to Song; its Functions, and its Position

The question I am applying myself to is not, however, whether folksongs should or should not be sung without accompaniment; but, rather, how far song of a more complex type, employing a more modern musical idiom, can be made intelligible and expressive without such external help. Accompaniment has come to occupy so important a position alike in the construction and in the expressiveness of modern song, that it is as well not to overlook the original meaning of the word Song, i.e. the vocal melody with the poet's words from which it sprang. This, obviously, is song-in-a-single-line, and anything added to it is accompaniment.

The functions of accompaniment to song, as we use it to-day,

are threefold:

(i) To sustain the voice, and help it in the creation of atmosphere;

(ii) To emphasize and beautify the vocal line by means of

counterpoint and musical ornament;

(iii) To elucidate the musical content of the song, by illuminating the harmony that surrounds the vocal line.

That being so, it is obvious that accompaniment now assumes a position in regard to the voice differing widely from any that was contemplated in the fifth century when the organ was introduced into the church to accompany the singing. The function of its dozen notes, playable only one at a time, was probably limited to teaching the singer his note and keeping him on it; and we shall probably be not far wrong if we assume the instrument to have been introduced into the service by the church authorities, more or less in self-defence against the singing.

I do not propose to enter here upon the fascinating but lengthy task of tracing the growth of accompaniment through the ages—say from the four-stringed lyre to the full orchestra of to-day—involving as it would a study of the history of song from David to Debussy and Eugène Goossens; but I think it will be agreed that from the sixth century (the period of our earliest exact knowledge of music) to the present day the course of the development of instrumental accompaniment in Europe has been from simplicity to complexity, and from complexity to super-complexity; until one is reminded of the intimidated amateur who, in a nightmare, found himself the unwilling audience of some queer music of the future, consisting of 'twenty-four consecutive and interdependent logarithmic studies for violin and 'cello, with differential and integral pianoforte accompaniment, supplemented by vocal unisonal exposition in five modern languages'.

I am not proposing to hold that the combination of voice and instruments, as we have it to-day, is not a lovely art, for indeed I regard it as a supreme art; but it is surely not so much a development of song, qua song, along the lines of the utterance of poetry in music, as it is concerted music with the voice used as one among other instruments. Indeed, the voice is not only often half concealed, but sometimes totally concealed; so that one may, not unnaturally, ask the question, 'Whence comes this conspiracy to cover up the human voice?' It can scarcely have been begun against the wishes of the singer; yet art-song was provided with an instrumental accompaniment from its inception—I use the term art-song to differentiate it from folk-song and

part-song.

Was it, then, the singer who insisted upon being accompanied? Was it some inherent modesty of his disposition that forbade him to trust himself alone? Or was it, perhaps, some germ of that terrible old fallacy that any addition *must* be an improvement?

Whatever may have been his view in the early days, I am inclined to regard the singer as having been neutral in all the latter-day development, and to ascribe the driving power, necessary for the production of so much progress in concerted music,

## The Restriction of Vocal Expressiveness

to the constant striving of the composer towards a more complete expressiveness. The expressiveness aimed at is, however, an utterly different kind of expressiveness from that to be derived from song, from poetry uttered in music; for are not the actual words freely sacrificed to the expression of their idea in music? Wherever we may look for the cause, the result is that the voice is being gradually absorbed into instrumental combination, treated as an orchestral instrument, with or without words, robbed of the pre-eminence naturally falling to it in song, and compelled, of course in varying degrees, to exchange subtlety of interpretation for something comparable to scene-painting. Indeed, wonderful and beautiful as are the results, the handling of masses of complex instrumental sound has involved the transfer of fineness of expression from the human voice, the most expressive of musical instruments, to the web of instrumental sound that surrounds it; so that, in such combination, the voice can no longer be used at its expressive best, but has to be used at its second best-i.e. within a more restricted range of expressiveness.

# MODERN UNACCOMPANIED SONG IN VARIOUS ASPECTS

### The Situation To-day

In setting out to examine the position to-day of song, i.e. of the melodic line carrying the poet's words, in regard to accompaniment, we find the human voice in close association with a volume of instrumental sound of a complexity never before reached in devising accompaniment for it. Together they serve to form an art completely beautiful and expressive; but if one asks oneself what, as regards the human voice carrying the poet's words, is the cost of using it, the answer must surely be, the sacrifice of simplicity and of fineness of vocal interpretation. Simplicity is, of course, a relative term; what is simple to one is complex to another, quite irrespective of period. Personally I can stand aside and witness the sacrifice of simplicity without a qualm, provided always that we lose thereby nothing in the range of expressiveness; of that we can afford to abate not one jot or tittle, for it is the inspiration of all art.

It would be futile to enter upon the composition of unaccompanied song for the sake of a return to simplicity, for the sake of the apparent simplicity of its single line. A return to simplicity for mere simplicity's sake, in any art, is of little value. There is no returning in art: art looks not back, but forward; always forward: it progresses; and it may well be that the next step towards a more complete vocal expressiveness will be found in the concentration of the several means to expression, within the compass of the single line of the voice. But for that to be possible, it must be capable of containing within its sweep those of the essentials to completeness that we have been in the habit of

diffusing over the accompaniment.

#### Concerted and 'Outline' Music

We know that the ideal accompaniment to song, whether it be for one instrument or several,

creates atmosphere, emphasizes and decorates the vocal line, and explains the harmonic content.

It follows, then, that unless we are to be the losers by dispensing with accompaniment, this song-in-a-single-line must fulfil the conditions already summarized in my definition of the musical part of the idea. If it fails in this, we shall have the uncomfortable feeling of something lacking. In looking at an outline drawing, we have no feeling of anything being lacking; indeed it may well be the complete expression of the artist's aesthetic experience. Music, says Stacy Aumonier (in One After Another), 'analyses nothing, but explains everything'; this is what an outline drawing can do; and it is for the composer to summon to his use a corresponding dexterity, and thus find the way to make an outline-music in nowise less expressive.

### The Poet's Point of View

THE poet has been described as the alchemist who takes the copper coinage of everyday speech and turns it into gold. There can scarcely be fine song without fine poetry, for the one is the genesis and inspiration of the other: the form and character of the one should determine the form and character of the other, yet by no means in the way of a mere musical replica.

'No developments of the accompanying music', wrote Richard Capell, 'alter the fact that the essence of lyric art is the beauty and interest of words—words coloured, of course, by musical tone, as a stained-glass window is vivified by the outside light—but

always interesting individual words.

Little is known of the music extemporized by poets when they were yet their own interpreters; and, in the conditions of that time, it may or may not have been a beautiful thing; but since the invention of monodia, i.e. of art-song, in which the melody is centred in a single voice instead of being distributed among several, the development of song has been along lines carrying it farther and farther from what may be termed the essential ideal of the lyric art.

It is therefore scarcely surprising that the attitude of poets towards the art of music has come to lack cordiality; for, after all, poets are human; yet I have never met one of them who did not care to have his verses set to music, although his knowledge of

the art was seldom more than superficial.

And the poets are within the truth when they say that music has a selfish way of usurping the major part of the interest in a song; and that their poems are consequently thrust into the background, and frequently sung unheard. That being the position, it is scarcely surprising that poets should welcome any new way of treating their verses: W. B. Yeats has written welcoming a method that leaves, as he says, 'the words audible and expressive'.

#### Verbal Music

There is, of course, a subtle music in the sound of the poet's words, arising like an aroma from the successive reaction of one verbal sound upon another. Some poets can recognize no other music; but the musician too often either fails to value it, or too

lightly casts it aside.

The success of the art of modern unaccompanied song must largely depend upon everything that the words are capable of conveying remaining manifest in the music. The verbal music of the poet is a thing so subtle, so elusive, that only the most supple musical medium is capable of retaining it, only the most transparent capable of revealing it. The human voice carrying the poet's words in a single thread of sound seems to offer us an ideal medium, at once supple and transparent. Let us see, then, what can be done with this single thread of sound, with no other sounds to inveigle the ear into following the beauty that grows from their interplay in considered juxtaposition.

A song of the type that we have come to consider as normal, i.e. song provided with accompaniment for one or more instruments, is constructed in such a way as to be dependent, in varying degree, but, none the less, intentionally dependent, upon each of the instruments employed having some share in the expressiveness

of the whole.

The musical line written for the voice and carrying the poet's words is thus necessarily composed in such a way as to be in itself an incomplete expression of the poem, intentionally incomplete; otherwise there would be no necessity for any further instrumental

parts to be added to complete it.

As every other form of song demands, then, the concerting of other parts, or accompaniment, in order to complete its expression of the poem, it follows that unaccompanied song may be considered to approach nearer to poetry than does any other type of vocal music; it is, indeed, poetry re-uttered in music, music in a single line.

The poet chooses the best words, and arranges them in such a way as to draw out of them the subtle music that he alone knows how to awaken. His arrangement of words is such that

they react upon each other—both in their capacity as symbols of thought and as verbal sounds—each thus lending to each an increased significance. The composer does the same thing with his notes, and with his musical figures and phrases, otherwise he will give us only prosy music. Now every inflexion of the spoken voice, even the most subtle, can be expressed in the succession of notes in which its words are sung; and the composer realizing the interaction of word upon word, and sensitive to its influence, has first not to lose it in his music, and ultimately, in his re-utter-

ance, to add to its significance.

It is sometimes held that every syllable of the poet's lines should have its note, and every note its syllable; but surely that is a matter of individual style, and so long as the re-utterance of a poem in the new medium expresses both word and idea, it were surely fruitless to tether composer to a formula. As an illustration of how unnecessary is such a fettering of the composer, I quote the first few bars of Cyril Scott's first contribution to unaccompanied song, Lamentation 1, where several notes go to the expression of a word. This is not a case where a difference could well have arisen between poet and composer, as Cyril Scott was both of them; but that does not detract from the value of the example; for surely the opening wail of the voice is a more complete expression of the word than he could have obtained from any single note; and it, moreover, suggests at once the atmosphere we are about to experience.

Most poets naturally have their own views upon the treatment of their lines, and Harold Monro, in offering unaccompanied song the genial hospitality of the Poetry Bookshop, puts forward an

interesting point with regard to rhythm, thus:

'Rhythm', he says, 'is part of the poet's full expression. If, then, the expression of the sense creates in itself a certain rhythm, when it comes to be set to music, the music must fit that rhythm, or else it will interfere with the sound of the words, and, through the sound, with the sense.'

There is no gainsaying the logic of this, and in the condition

<sup>1</sup> The music examples are all given at the end of the book: see p 49 et seq.

#### Words in Music

he lays down there would appear to be little temptation to the composer to do otherwise than develop, in his re-utterance, the poet's obvious intention. I see no reason, however, to imagine that to-day any one is likely to set about the ungrateful task of framing new rules for composers to break: modern poets have swept away reams of rules, and modern poetry at its best is sufficient justification. Poets are rarely unreasonable in their demands upon the composer, and I may offer the setting of a poem by Frederick William Harvey as an instance that more than illustrates this.

Here is the poem 1:

Sweetness of birdsong shall fall upon my heart,
Shall fall upon my heart;
Nor will I strive to mimic the beauty that I find;
But lie in a dream, and open wide my heart
And let the song of the birds sink down into my mind.
And the peace that it brings, and the joy of joyous things
Shall some day brim, maybe, my heart and my brain,
And I will make a singing of long-forgotten things,
And long-forgotten pain,

And a heart broken and mended with Beauty in a place Where troubled dreams all ended in birdsong and rain, Calling, and falling, Quietly.

In its composition, the musical echo of the first line unfortunately slipped out of my mind, and was omitted. No poet could be expected to appreciate such an accident; but he wrote that he recognized the difference between 'reading music' and 'singing music', and that in his view the repetition was not essential in the musical setting; so the song was allowed to stand as unintentionally edited. The first lines of the music are given on p. 50.

<sup>1</sup> From Ducks, by F. W. Harvey. Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd.

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# The Composer's Point of View— Concerning Form

ALL composers of music are, in greater or less degree, poets, who choose for their medium of expression not words—words musical or less musical—but, in their stead, musical sounds of various shapes and colours. Every composer who takes in hand the composition of unaccompanied song, will have his own idea of the matter that appeals to him as suitable for re-utterance in his new medium, and his own manner of re-uttering it. Others have also their own ideas on the subjects; one genial Mus. Doc. declines to hear it at all, and fails to find words to describe the disruptive thing he feels intuitively that it must be.

Edward J. Dent, in an article on the subject, wrote:

'All these experiments show that we are gradually moving towards a greater concentration of attention on the melodic line, and with that towards a much more free and complicated treatment of melody than was ever possible when melody was fettered by the conventions of harmony.'

Another considerable musician has laid it down that the success of modern unaccompanied song must rest solely upon the question of how near it can be brought to approach to folk-song; showing thereby that he has not the glimmering of an idea of its aims and possibilities. For if the success of the art can be said to rest upon any one thing, that thing is the degree of completeness to which it can be an expressive re-utterance of a poem in the new medium. In the consideration of that point will be involved the question of how far a new significance has been added, for it is just the perception of such a new significance that may sometimes flash into the heart of the listener a ray of the light that never was on sea or land.

No doubt it is still possible to sing the successive verses of

### Its Relation to Folk-Song

a poem to the repetition of a melody, as in folk-song, and even,

sometimes, to express them in it.

In Liza Lehmann's 'Tis the hour of Farewell', each of its three verses consists of question and answer, a form not infrequently found in folk-song, and one suggestive of folk-song treatment.

In Gerrard Williams's Indian Cradle Song, though its verses are varied, there is in it something of the folk-song feeling, the form of the poem permitting that treatment, and the matter,

indeed, inviting it. The first verse is given on p. 49.

In The little boy Love, quoted on p. 51, there is even less departure from folk-song form; but here, again, the two verses are conceived in the same spirit, the whole, indeed, being nothing

more than the merest plaisanteric.

In dealing with the picturesque verses of Walter de la Mare's A Song of Soldiers<sup>2</sup>, Frederic Austin was faced with far greater difficulties; and while not entirely losing sight of the folk-song form, he has treated the three verses of the poem in a singularly characteristic and apposite way; for after setting out his versedesign, as quoted on p. 52, he has remoulded it in a dexterous

fashion in the succeeding verses.

Despite these examples of adherence to or only partial departure from folk-song form, it seems probable that, with the freer forms that poets employ to-day, the composer is more likely to abandon the formality so cherished in the past, and to allow the form of his music to develop naturally from the form taken by the poet's verse, and by the idea that it embodies. But whatsoever may be the form of a song, it is imperative that it be fully apprehended by the singer, for in the interpretation of this type of song the singer is paramount.

There are certain stage plays that are commonly spoken of as actor-proof; and there are certain songs that are almost singer-proof. I can imagine some well-known classics falling within this category, and one knows of no few modern songs that could

1 'Tis the bour of Farewell, by Liza Lehmann (Chappell & Co.).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> A Song of Soldiers. Poem by Walter de la Mare; music by Frederic Austin (F. & B. Goodwin).

undoubtedly be saved from the inadequacies of an indifferent singer by a superb accompanist. But it would be futile to seek singer-proof songs among the unaccompanied; for these are, by their very nature, more utterly dependent upon the singer than is any other type of song, and it therefore follows that unaccompanied song should be conceived on lines that bring forth all that is best in the singer's art.

Modern unaccompanied song is not a new art, nor is it a return to an old art; but it is a new branch of the art of song. and, as such, demands alike for its composition and for its interpretation something in the nature of new technique, the reason being that the composer and the singer alike find themselves in the presence of new conditions that have to be met. At the outset, no longer will the composer have the instrumental prelude with which to usher in the voice. Despite the fact of its being an integral part of the composition, and therefore necessary to the completion of the design of what has become the normal type of song, it has come to be regarded by a section of the audience as nothing more than a signal that their conversation must cease or must be rounded off, as neatly as may be-within the span of say eight bars. But now that it has no part in the type of song that we are considering, we are left with the bare idea of the single voice, rising against a background of silence, revealing for us the beauty of some poem, uttering it in music, until, at the last, as Walter de la Mare has it,

The happiest throats'
Most easeful, lovely notes
Fall back into the veiling silentness.

But the question arises, how are we to introduce this voice, how replace the prelude, this danger-signal to the chatterers? By what means shall we accomplish the purpose that it undoubtedly served of attracting, and, in suitable circumstances, of riveting the attention of the audience? It is obviously undesirable that the singer should begin to sing while folks are still conversing; something approaching silence must necessarily first be secured.

### Form and Formality

It has been found in practice that this can be satisfactorily done by a simple announcement by the singer, say 'Three unaccompanied songs': this being followed, at a suitable interval, by the title and the names of the authors before each of the songs in its turn. Properly spoken, this suffices to induce a silence, not only of the ordinary concert-room degree, but something more expectant, more tense; and the silence thus induced may well be a wonderful background for the voice, and one that prepares in the audience the frame of mind most to be desired in it.

I have already referred to the possibility of the composer allowing the form of his music to develop naturally from the form of the poem, which is itself governed by the presentation of the idea that it embodies, the intensity of the music thus ebbing and flowing in consonance with the rise and fall in the significance of the poetic content; and such a method is not unlikely to lead us into the realm of free musical form, that is, of form which, though balanced in the spirit of the word, may yet be balanced in a different way and at wider intervals, and possibly at more unexpected intervals of recurrence, than those usually found in music of any more formal type; but nothing could be more mistaken than an implied assumption that the absence of formality entails the absence of form.

Folk-song is found generally to consist of short phrases or figures, frequently in pairs, corresponding closely in their shape and in their length, that answer and complete each other either sequentially or at an interval short enough to be obvious to the casual listener who forms a considerable proportion of an audience.

In modern unaccompanied song we are likely to find phrases of greater length and with a wider sweep. As an example I quote on p. 53 the first phrase of Felix White's *Desolation* 1. This is not only a long phrase, but one that seems to me peculiarly expressive.

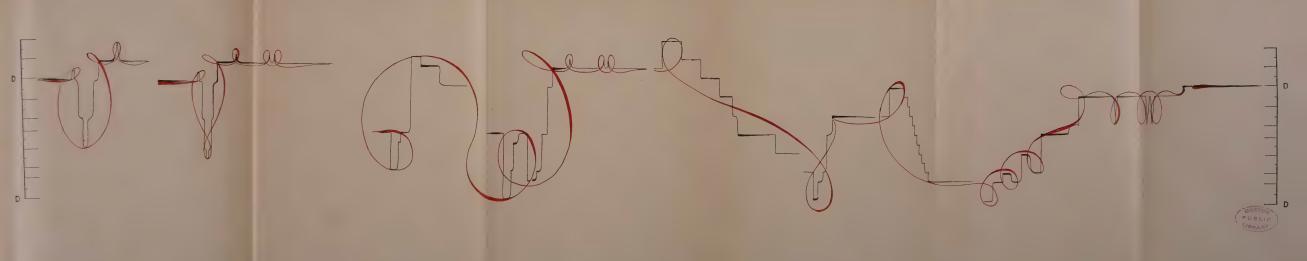
In dealing with the freer forms, less patent, and therefore less easily recognized, the utmost precision in notation is necessary,

<sup>1</sup> Desolation. Verses by Shelley; music by Felix White (F. & B. Goodwin).

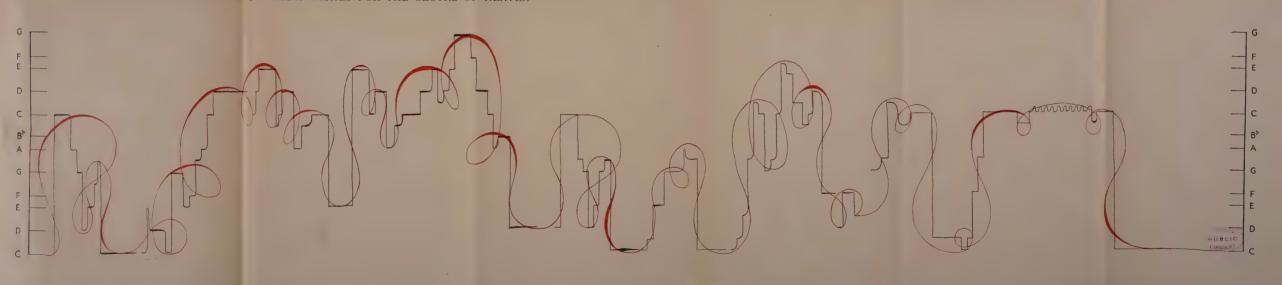
for otherwise the composer makes the realization of the form of his phrases unnecessarily difficult, and it is upon the balanced inter-relation of them that the recognition of the form of the entire fabric depends. In my opinion the sweep of the phrase that goes to the construction of free form needs to be known in order to be realized and recognized; but, after all, all poetic music, no less than any other art, needs to be known if we are to

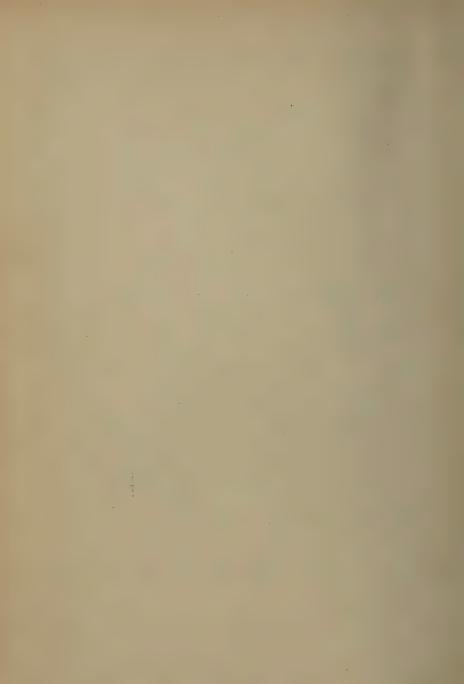
experience its full import.

A critic of one of the earliest performances of modern unaccompanied songs condemned them as tortuous wanderings, and expressed the view that the melodies were too amorphous to stand by themselves. One remembers, however, how tortuous a simple path through a wood may appear when we take it for the first time; and how amorphous even the clearest landscape, if seen through field-glasses with the focus wrongly adjusted. In much the same way, however, as a painter exhibits his picture for us to see, but does not publicly discuss the question of how far he imagines it to realize his ideal of it, the composer allows his work to be issued for performance and for criticism, and it would be equally absurd for him to complain when it received either the one or the other. None the less I like to imagine that had the critic not been hearing those particular songs for the first time, he would scarcely have condemned them on those particular grounds, whatever his ultimate conclusion as to their value. There is plenty of room for difference of opinion in all questions relating to art, and it would be fatuous to expect different people to receive in the same way a type of music to which they have not been accustomed. The whole trend of music has been such as to teach us to recognize and appreciate the simultaneous movement and interplay of several voices or parts; while this unaccompanied song demands the use of a totally distinct faculty, that of thinking along the single line that consists of the poet's words re-uttered in music, of the whole of which, consciously or subconsciously, we realize the form. I have made graphs of some of these songs to ascertain how far the shape of the resulting design corresponds with that produced in the mind by the vocal

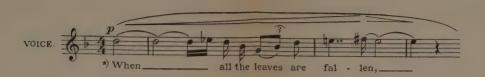




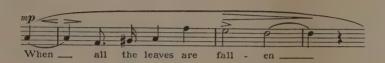


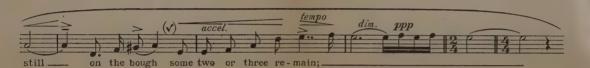


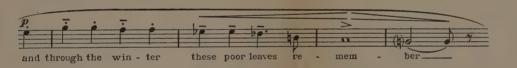
## 'THE LAST OF THE LEAVES ON THE BOUGH' BY HERBERT BEDFORD



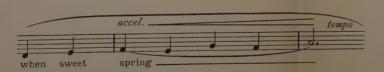


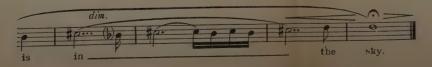














•) If preferred "Ah" may be substituted for the words of this line.

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## The Graph of a Musical Line

line when heard. I do not imagine that one can learn much from these graphs, nor are they put forward as a practicable scheme of notation; but they are not, perhaps, without interest as a matter of curiosity. Two of them are reproduced here on the reduced scale practicable, and they call for no explanation to anyone acquainted with graphs, except that the length of the notes is represented along the horizontal scale, and their relative pitch in the vertical scale; and that upon the straight lines produced I have superimposed more or less appropriate curves.

Acting upon an idea derived from these graphs, the publishers of the first series of modern unaccompanied songs have adopted a format that is intended to make the musical form clearer to the eye than it would be were they cast in the usual mould involving the cutting up of the musical phrase, without respect

to its length, in order to fit the width of the page.

It will be seen from this example 1, which is included by the courtesy of the publishers, that each phrase, irrespective of its length, is complete in one line, enabling the singer more easily to realize just where and how the phrases correspond and where and how they balance. In order to preserve these phrased lines without a break, it has been necessary to print the examples at the end of the book horizontally.

I shall leave the subject of form by quoting a couple of pregnant observations on its nature by Lascelles Abercrombie<sup>2</sup>, for they

contain in their few words the gist of the matter:

Form is the expression in technique of the unity of the artist's inspiration. It is not in itself significant, but it affects a specially significant presentation of whatever matter it submits.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The last of the leaves on the bough. Lines by Carmen Sylva, translated by Alma Strettel; music by Herbert Bedford (F. & B. Goodwin).

<sup>2</sup> Essay towards a Theory of Art, by Lascelles Abercrombie.

## The re-utterance of Poetry in Music

It is obvious that composition involving the re-utterance of poetry in a single line of music presents for the composer problems that differ from those that arise in the composition of concerted or accompanied song; and seeing that the two branches of the art start with a common ideal, i.e. the complete expression of poetry in music, it follows that the differences lie in the technique

required.

I have suggested that certain methods of accompanying the voice have entailed in ever-increasing degree the abandonment of simplicity; but it cannot safely be assumed from this that modern unaccompanied song necessarily involves a return to simplicity, though in some of its aspects it may do so. Cedar Paul, in an article on the subject in *The Musical Standard*, realizes this when she writes of 'the supreme difficulty of a successful musical setting without the aid of harmony'. After expressing her belief that this can be done, and in a sensitive way, she continues thus: 'The unaccompanied song has to suggest all by the intensity of the atmosphere it creates, the atmosphere that the singer is able to re-create by *re-living* the word creation of the poet, and the melody creation of the composer.'

We are handling a supple medium, probably there is none more supple, and being supple it is intensely sensitive. There is no nuance, no expressiveness, too fine for it; and there can be, moreover, no more grateful medium in which to work, for nothing that is put into it is lost, whether it be contributed by the poet,

the composer, or the singer.

The composer is concerned with concentrating all that he has set himself to express, within the compass of a single sensitive line, that must be so shaped as to demand no external harmonic explanation in order to make it intelligible. Though he may

### The Background of Silence

abandon the verse form, a break in the musical line is of course a necessity to the singer; and, far from being a hindrance or an impediment in the musical design, it may well be of arresting value. Any caesura in the poet's verse is available for the composer's use, and can be so handled as to be an integral part in the balance of his design.

We know how impressive can be the effect of a musical pause, a real silence, that in one pellucid moment can crystallize our impression of all that has gone before; and realizing this, we must press silence into our service.

Silence, properly understood, is an invaluable adjunct of music no less than of speech; and the pause of the orator has always

been recognized as one of his most poignant effects.

It is the perfectest herald of joy, Claudio tells us in *Much Ado about Nothing*; like other heralds, silence has its degrees; and though it would probably be more accurately regarded as a condition, its effect upon us, when appreciated, is no less vivid than is that of specific sound; so that they who incline to regard it as nothing of more importance than the mere opportunity for the cessation of the effort of listening are guilty of obvious error.

We may divide silence, relative to music, into three classes:

The silence *before*—involving expectation; the silence *after*—involving realization; and

the silence between—which is capable of being used in very much the same way as that in which a painter introduces a splash of vivid colour into his picture to accentuate a contrast or to rivet the attention. And the singular thing about this is that silence, so far from being a vivid colour, is no colour; but is, in itself, something strangely neutral, even acutely neutral, that miraculously serves the same end.

In its relation to music, it is probably true that the expressive value of silence is almost entirely dependent upon the volume of the sound, or upon the intensity of the sound, that we place beside it, chiefly, but not entirely, of the sound that immediately

precedes it; but silence repays her debt by bestowing redoubled

significance upon the sound that follows.

Although we know how challenging silence is capable of being, one of her virtues is that she never contradicts our imagination. Many an ill-drawn or ill-rendered accompaniment will play us this disagreeable trick, and will even sometimes rudely *interrupt* the cadence of the voice. It is perhaps this sympathetic attitude of silence that has earned her the favour of many poets; and numerous and beautiful are the attributes with which they have dowered her.

Being impressed into our service, she will demand of us the observance of meticulous accuracy in the notation of rests, equally with that of notes; and it is needless to emphasize the necessity of such accuracy if the relation between the phrases is not to be liable to misinterpretation, involving the destruction of the

balance of the arabesque.

The poet's verse, swelling to high heaven and then dying proudly, must not find in our single line merely the reflection of its form; but the one must live in the other, mean it. Clarisse Speed has put this point cogently in writing that the composer's task is to give a new significance to a poem, 'not by addition of manifold illustrative effects in another medium, but by real absorption and re-utterance in it, so that it speaks anew and yet is still itself'.

This is the composer's task, and it may well be a labour of love.

Considerable diversity of opinion is found in the views of different writers on the subject what are the conditions precedent that should be fulfilled by modern unaccompanied song, and authority could be quoted for each of the following, conflicting though they be:

I. If it is to be intelligible, it must approach as nearly as possible to the condition of folk-song—I have already quoted examples from songs that may be said to be founded upon a folk-song basis.

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### Ideas of Conditions Precedent

2. If it is to give an impression of completeness, it must be modal in character. I give on p. 53 an illustration from Jane Joseph's *Easter*, a song written in the manner of Plainsong.

3. If it is to be interesting, it must give a pictorial effect. The last few phrases from Evangeline passes are to be found

on p. 54. It is a song in which such an effect is aimed at.

4. If it is to be expressive, song-in-a-single-line must necessarily employ a 'modern' musical idiom. The few lines given on p. 55 from George Oldroyd's A Farewell are an example that may be considered to fulfil this condition.

5. If it is to be acceptable its subject must be narrative; or,

again, it postulates a reflective intimacy.

6. If it is to be understood, it must by no means contain any

suggestion of modern harmony.

7. The melodic outline must include in itself the essential notes of the underlying harmony. An example of such an outline is provided by one of Harry Farjeon's *Tunes for a Penny* 

Piper 1 (p. 56).

- 8. It must avoid all harmonic thought (both real and implied) and concentrate upon the melodic line. Each of the two examples on pages 57 and 58 seems to me to fulfil the last of these conditions. The first of them is from Sappho's *Dirge of Adonis*, translated by Bliss Carman, and set to music by Francesca Hall. The second is from Frederic Austin's *Wanderers*<sup>2</sup>.
- 9. It is an art suitable only for a singer who is capable of varying the colour of the voice in an exceptional degree. We have already noticed the type of folk-song that consists of a series of questions and answers, and there may well be other types of song demanding some measure of dual personification on the part of the singer. As an example of such a song I include part of

Wanderers. Poem by Walter de la Mare; music by Frederic Austin

(F. & B. Goodwin).

<sup>1 &#</sup>x27;A Song for Shadows'. Verses by Eleanor Farjeon; music by Harry Farjeon (F. & B. Goodwin).

my setting of the first few lines of Twelfth Night<sup>1</sup>, given on p. 59, where the voice of the lovesick duke alternates with the sound of the music to which he is listening.

Now without wishing to quarrel with any of the several conditions laid down by other people who have given thought to the subject, I find that while song-in-a-single-line may well respond to any one of them, no one of them is, in fact, a condition precedent; and the artistic success of an unaccompanied song is in nowise dependent upon its fulfilling any one of them. Each of them seems to predicate something that song-in-a-single-line may well be; but there is one thing that it must be, and that is expressive: and there is one thing that it should never be, and that is self-conscious.

In one of his prefaces to *The Brook Kerith*, George Moore has told us that so far from tethering his muse to the centre of his theme, and thus consciously circumscribing its movement within limits rigidly pre-ordained, his memory of the writing of that book resembles 'a wild chase after a story beckoning me always, and a multitude of moving incidents, every one falling into its place, or seeming to do so, my intervention in the adjustment

being of the very slightest '.

The conscious and deliberate adoption of any special musical mode or idiom may well involve us in imitativeness, in artistic insincerity. It is, at the least, needlessly to embarrass ourselves with the harness of what Leigh Henry has called 'the heavy concentration on methods'; and is not unlikely to induce in the artist a self-complacent artificiality that loses the matter, and the faithful expression of it, in the consideration of his means of expression. It is not unlike a composer bestowing upon himself Maria's advice to Malvolio: 'Put thyself into a trick of singularity.'

To take a poem and transform it into a song is to lift it into another plane, a different plane, but not necessarily a higher

<sup>1 &#</sup>x27;If music be the food of love.' Lines by Shakespeare, from Twelfth Night, Act I, Scene i. Music by Hertert Bedford (F. & B. Goodwin).

### The Necessity of Assimilation

plane. The mood of the composer must match that of the poet at the time he wrote the poem; indeed, the ideal of song composition is so to concentrate upon the expression of the full significance of a poem—inward to outward, evermore—that its re-utterance in music may 'remould it nearer to the heart's desire'.

Complete assimilation, absolute comprehension of the poem, seem obvious necessities to the composition of song. Yet I recall a poem expressive of disappointment, disillusion, set by an accomplished musician as though it had been one of the happiest of love-songs. This could not have been had he rightly understood the purport of the poem, had he realized the poet's experience that it expressed. One can only imagine him to have been so carried away by the verbal music of the verse, that he realized nothing beyond it. A misunderstanding of the text to such an extent as this is perhaps not frequent; but in art there is no room for such misunderstanding, and in unaccompanied song such a discrepancy between the spirit of the words and the music, such 'a contradiction on the tongue', would probably be impossible.

### On Style

'Music', says Stacey Aumonier, 'interprets us . . . all the

half-wakened dreams, the best in us, the worst in us.'

And a composer's style is his individual manner of expressing the music that is within him: it is, in music, probably as elusive a thing as is style in any other of the arts; and it is probably more difficult to discuss, owing to the very nature of music.

It is not unusual to hear pedantic persons talk of what is known (for want of a better term) as the modern style as being an affectation—the word is not infrequently qualified by a more or less explosive adjective. But the pedant forgets it is not one whit less an affectation to adopt the methods of a dim and dusty past, some of which, when disinterred, are capable of no more expressiveness than one might reasonably expect from the rattle of dry bones.

Some years ago the Abbé Perosi came to London, speaking a musical language culled from Palestrina; but although one admired his skill, one could not fail to recognize in it a style donned with his habit, artistically unconvincing, and with some-

thing of a suggestion of Dead Sea fruit.

Unless, like the Abbé, we wilfully blind ourselves to the age in which we live, deliberately shut it out from us, we are in it and of it; and our means of expressing ourselves are also in it and of it, subject to the colouring emanating from personality and environment. In our daily intercourse it is natural for us to continue the use of words and phrases of which the true significance to us, to-day, is something totally different from that which they bore for our forefathers (e.g. the word sunrise no longer implies for us the mounting of the sun above an immutable horizon, but we continue, none the less, to use the word unchanged). Ideas evolve incessantly, and language evolves incess

### Ornament

santly; sometimes by equal strides, sometimes otherwise; but we talk the language of our age, it is our means of expression, coming to us almost unsought; it is modified within us unconsciously, and becomes part of ourselves. Those who express themselves in music have also the language of music as they find it, in a state of continuous evolution. Sometimes they help it to evolve, not by any conscious adoption of the ideas, the formulae, the idioms of other musicians, but by the sheer necessity of their own expression. The tendency of the boundaries of musical expression being to widen, to circumscribe one's musical means of expressiveness would be not unlike a poet voluntarily curtailing his vocabulary, let us say by ruling out of bounds all words except those of Saxon origin.

Such a procedure would not tend to help him to his complete poetic expression: nor, in the parallel plane, would the effect upon us be in any degree enhanced by our knowledge that a composer has similarly placed himself at a disadvantage by limiting himself to the use of, say, an Oriental scale used a thousand years ago, or a modern variation of it invented yesterday. We don't want his handicap, we want his ideas, and we want them expressed

up to the limits of his technique.

We may perhaps regard style as our subconscious manner of expression; conditioned, even quickened, by the nature of the thought it has to express. Were it conscious, it would be something deliberately donned, affected, artistically insincere, a kind of fancy dress. Style is, then, the purely individual part of the composer's vision, brought into existence by the very necessity of its achieving expression; but assuming, as we may, that a composer brings his own style to the composition of unaccompanied song, it will, none the less, be artistically satisfactory only in so far as it succeeds, not in a new decoration of the poem, but in helping towards its complete expression in the new medium, and of adding to its significance in its re-utterance.

One of the contributaries to style is ornament: it is one of its distinguishing attributes. I do not refer to the merely

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superficial ornament that may be applied or added to musical phrases—a trill here, a grace-note there, like a pretentious ribbon tied in a bow round a suburban flower-pot—I refer rather to the ornament that is an essential part of the integral coherence of the design; not an excrescence, but a factor in the balance of the arabesque. As an example I quote on p. 60 the opening lines of The Hay Sings, where the ornament is the structure.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Hay sings. Lines by Carmen Sylva; music by Herbert Bedford (F. & B. Goodwin).

### Some Considerations of Tempo

'In proportion as it feels the joy of purely physical well-being, humanity will want to express itself, in music, by sheer pace,' wrote Ernest Newman in *Music and Letters*. And undoubtedly the speed at which a song and its accompaniment move is a suggestive factor in their expressiveness. Indeed, as regards song this appears too patent a truism to need much discussion here, though one recalls many an instance of speed being misused by the composer; of the speed at which certain phrases have of necessity to be sung if their musical character is to be preserved, rendering it practically impossible for the words to remain audible. Such a song may sometimes be saved by its accompaniment, or musically, even *made* by it, even though in it time 'galops withal', when it should have done no more than 'amble withal'; but in the type of song that we are considering the question of the rate of movement of the voice becomes a special consideration.

I do not imagine that it could be held that there is one tempo and one only at which such a song must be sung; and hence the unsuitability of metronome markings, despite their possibility of

meticulous accuracy.

There is probably only one *tempo* for one song *for one singer*; but such a *tempo* may well be quite unsuitable for another singer with a different vocal style and possibly a different interpretative outlook.

In the process of composition, the composer's lyrical instinct will reveal to him not so much an arbitrary speed at which his notes are to succeed each other, as the expressive rate of occurrence for successive notes in their true relation to the occurrence of the poet's words, or of their component syllables, as they rise in the mind. And in the background, behind all this consideration of the balance between words and notes in their movement, will be the composer's subconscious feeling for the exigencies, the limita-

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tions, the possibilities, of the voice of his dreams, the ideal that he can hear only in his imagination, but upon the realization of which, by the singer, will devolve the ultimate blending the two in the new medium wherein the poet's words may not only not be submerged in music, but may really live anew in it, surrender their fragrance, and reveal the beauty of the musical fall of their

syllables.

The beauty that lies in this art necessarily differs, both in kind and in the mode of its expression, from that which we recognize in the accompanied or concerted song to which we have accustomed ourselves to listen; but it may, none the less, prove to be of an intimate kind attainable in no other medium. And one realizes, also, that even beauty should not be the conscious and deliberate aim of the composer, any more than it should be that of any other artist. The aim of the artist is complete expression, in our case by complete re-utterance within the single line of the voice; and let me conclude this part of my subject, dealing with the re-utterance of poetry in music, by borrowing once more from Lascelles Abercrombie, who summarizes the matter thus:

This is the artist's sincerity: to attend faithfully and laboriously to the utterance that will say exactly what is in him, neither more nor less; to attend to this without allowing the reward of it—beauty—to divide his mind, and perhaps prejudice him in his selection of means. A work of art, in fact, is not created in order to be beautiful; beauty is the sign that it has succeeded in being a work of art.

### The Singer's Point of View

THE attitude of singers towards modern unaccompanied song in its present state of development is, not unnaturally, a divided one; one section being whole-heartedly in its favour, while another section no less cordially disapproves of it. To the latter the idea comes as a shock, while the former find in it something akin to a revelation of their own powers.

Between the two extremes lie many and various views, of

which the following are examples:

I. Its freedom gives the song the character of extemporization.

2. While having the appearance of offering freedom to the singer, it still holds him by an invisible chain.

3. It is an art peculiarly suited to the singer who possesses the

faculty of varying the colour of the voice.

4. It brings the singer into intimate touch with the audience.

5. Any unaccompanied song would be improved by the addition of an accompaniment.

6. Despite its suggestion of simplicity, the human voice, naked and unashamed, is really an acquired taste.

Upon these opinions I offer no comment here, preferring to let them stand as the expression of points of view more or less conflicting, and consequently interesting in a study of the subject.

Of the singers we are going to ask something more than has been asked of them before, for we are going to ask them to suggest for us everything that the instrumental accompaniment has hitherto given us. This involves the demand for a more vivid expressiveness; exacting in the highest degree what Cortot has termed 'imaginative collaboration'.

Unaccompanied song is the great revealer, not only of the song, but of the singer too. The ideal singer has a poetic insight into

music, and a lover's comprehension of poetry; and I would add to these the special gift of expression and interpretation that can make 'a familiar thing become divine in the utterance'.

I have already suggested that accompaniment began by being indispensable. From that it became customary and more insistent of recognition; and as the singer learned to lean upon it, his self-reliance fell into decay; the result being that to-day the average instrumentalist is a more accomplished musician than is the average singer; but modern unaccompanied song, wrote Clarisse Speed, 'demands that the singer shall sing, and shall understand'.

A good deal has been foreboded by the night-ravens about the difficulty likely to be found by singers in maintaining the pitch when singing, unaccompanied, any but the simplest music. That fear proves to be a mare's nest; for, strangely enough, unaccompanied singing is itself the remedy for singing out of tune. The probable explanation of this is that the singer who is cursed with that grievous fault might trace it to the bad habit of listening to the instrumental accompaniment instead of to his own voice.

### Qualifications

In considering the qualifications specially necessary for the interpretation of modern unaccompanied song, there are perhaps just two things that may require special study. They are: the sensitive appreciation of line and balance, and the faculty of concentration.

How far either of these will need special study will naturally depend upon the poise and trend of the singer's mind. The scaffolding will have gone; the props upon which he has made a habit of relying will have been taken away; and the voice asked

to stand alone, independent, free.

To the mediocre singer the idea will be Anathema, nothing less. He has relied upon the piano for his rhythm and his accent; he has allowed his voice to be shepherded between the comfortable hurdles of the accompaniment, and his smudgy passages have crept through undetected. Alarmed at the prospect of being freed from the trammels of the accompaniment that he has come to regard as his natural guide, philosopher, and friend, he will not relish the privilege of standing alone, independent, free. 'Give me the piano every time,' says he. On the other hand, the suppleness of the medium instantly adjusts itself to the singer's needs and to his mood of the moment. Every beauty of the singing voice, and every beauty of the singer's art, come into the light of day to be appreciated and enjoyed. No inflexion of the voice is obscured, no tone-colour obliterated, no subtlety of interpretation lost in the waves of accompaniment.

Modern unaccompanied song is capable of being the voice at its expressive best: in it the accomplished singer can realize for

us what Martin Armstrong has called the

Note of gold,
Hid in the heart of laughter,
Heart of sighs,
In measured golden music flying after
The golden voice that flies.

### The Human Voice and an Explanation from Acoustics

In an article entitled 'The Singing Voice', Francis Toye wrote: 'Artistically speaking, the orthodoxy of one generation is always apt to become the heresy of the next, so that no one need feel surprised at the reviving interest in the voice among serious musicians. It was bound to come and is very welcome, for of all instruments of music the human voice is the most varied, the most expressive, and the most natural.'

When we hear it against a background of silence, it reveals its possession of an arresting quality, easy to appreciate, but far from easy to define; differing utterly from any other musical instrument, and more than can be accounted for by the mere difference in the character of tone. The voice is heard at its expressive best when heard without accompaniment, and this fact is susceptible of an explanation from acoustics.

Starting, then, with a dry definition: a musical sound consists of a number of component sinusoidal vibrations of frequencies of integral multiples of the fundamental frequency, i.e. that of the

note that we hear.

Now occultists tell us that each one of us is surrounded by an emanation of our personality that has been termed an aura; and, for the purpose of differentiation, a person's aura is spoken of as being of a colour corresponding, on some occult basis, to his personality. Whether this is so or not, the idea serves for my illustration; for in much the same way as each one of us is considered to be surrounded by his aura, the tone produced by a voice, or by any other musical instrument, is surrounded by overtones, or harmonics.

The human ear contains a great number of resonators; and

### The Bloom on the Voice

when a musical sound reaches it, certain of these resonators respond to the component vibrations of the sound, thus automatically analysing it—resolving it to its component parts.

These component parts vary according to the instrument from which the notes are produced, and it is the distribution and balance of the component harmonics that determine the quality of a note, and give it the distinctive character by which we

recognize it.

This distinctive character is a vital part of a note, and of its ultimate beauty; and it is no more difficult to differentiate this beauty from that of another voice or of another instrument in which the harmonies are distributed or balanced differently, than it is to differentiate, say, the bloom on purple grapes from the bloom on purple plums.

And now we come to the root of the matter as it concerns

unaccompanied song.

So long as the series of vibrations set up by a single voice remains alone, free from the interruption arising from the interjection of any other series of vibrations, all its characteristic overtones reach the resonators of the ear, and enable us to hear

the voice in the fullness of its beauty.

No sooner, however, do we permit the introduction of a second series of vibrations (whether pertaining to notes that are concordant or discordant to those of the first series is immaterial) than the subtler overtones, that are common to the two, coincide and commingle; and the resonators being no longer capable of distinguishing them, the ear is deceived into a false analysis. The result is that the quality of both series of notes as heard is changed for us, and the voice is, in effect, robbed of its ultimate beauty. This treatment of the voice is in a way comparable to dusting the bloom from grapes; and it follows that until we have listened to the singing voice, without accompaniment, we may very possibly have heard some divine concerted music in which the voice has taken a more or less prominent part, but we cannot have heard the voice, qua voice, at its best.

To some listeners the voice in unaccompanied song reveals beauties never heard in it before; while, as they grow accustomed, others find known beauties becoming more beautiful in its more vivid expressiveness. Such an exceptional instrument is surely worthy of exceptional treatment at the hands of the composer; and, as he accustoms himself to thinking along the single line of unaccompanied song, it is not too much to expect that he, too, will discover in it new beauties, new potentialities, that will become part of his vision. I have said we are asking for a more vivid expressiveness; and, fortunately, the human voice possesses this divine attribute, that the more freely we ask of it, the more freely it responds. The fact of its being able to use the poet's words in the perfecting of its own melodic expressiveness, differentiates it from all other musical instruments; and differentiates, also, the character of its expressiveness from the character of the expressiveness of all other musical instruments. The human voice thus remains apart; a thing of beauty apart from all other things of beauty.

### The Audience

And now we come to that important external factor to the completion of any work of art—the audience. It seems likely that for the appreciation of modern unaccompanied song, a quality of alertness of the imagination may be needed similar to that which comes naturally to our aid when we witness a stage-play produced without the usual explanation of scenery, i.e. without illustrative effects in another medium.

The impression we receive from a work of art varies, both in kind and in degree, in accordance with the imagination that we bring to the appreciation of it; and we also know that the imagination is more readily stirred by our emotions than by our critical faculty. An audience is said to be more emotional than the individual members of it, and its collective imagination is there-

fore more readily stirred.

Poetry re-uttered in music, in the form of song-in-a-single-line, gives a free rein, not only to the mood of its interpreter, but also to the imagination of the audience. It is therefore not surprising to find wide diversity in the impressions made upon different listeners by the same song; for each will respond according to the kind and quality of his individual imagination. The conscious exercise of our faculty of criticism, or of analysis, stifles, for the time being, our capacity for appreciating—of appreciating in the sense of enjoying—any work of art; for it destroys the possibility of attaining the condition of re-living within ourselves the aesthetic experience of its creator in the act of creating the work of art before us. But this is the condition of mind of the ideal sensitive listener, who, multiplied, would make the ideal audience.

### On Listening to Music

In every audience there are people for whom anything unusual is suspect; and the mere idea, not necessarily of modern unaccompanied song, but rather the idea of what they fearfully imagine it to be, suffices to raise the bristles of their self-defence. Or, borrowing a simile from Max Beerbohm, 'Suspicion takes a slide down the banisters of their mind, and lands with a shock'.

Implying in the listener, as it does, not necessarily something more, but rather something different in the manner of listening, it would be unreasonable to expect any audience, accustomed to the running commentary of an accompaniment, to grasp imme-

diately the whole significance of song-in-a-single-line.

It would serve little purpose to concentrate one's sole attention upon the thread of music as a separate entity, for apart from its intimate relation with words and with the sound of the syllables, and with the ideas they convey in the new medium, it might conceivably have no other definite meaning and yet still remain an artistic success. It can certainly not be appraised by a standard that has been brought into being for the nice appreciation of music of a difficult type, solid music, the foundation of which

is the interplay of moving parts.

It has been suggested that modern unaccompanied song bears at relation to contrapuntal music similar to that of an outline drawing to the painted canvas. But while the term outline-music is perhaps not ineptly applied, it could probably be held that an outline drawing, if not too rigid a thing as it comes into being, becomes too fixed and final a thing, when once it is made, to serve as a satisfactory analogy for the single line of the unaccompanied voice in which a poem is to be expressed. That line is at once so fluid, so evanescent, that if we sought something that appealed through the eye in a manner comparable with that in which it appeals to the ear, we should find the musical line to possess less in common with the drawn line of

### A Visible Simile

a crayon or a brush upon a flat surface, than with the imaginary

line that represents the path of a bird in flight.

The bird traces its path in thin air, its every turn and its every flutter clear to the eye, less indeed a bird than movement made visible, and ere you can speak it is gone, leaving not a wrack behind.

The eye has followed its curves beautiful and fantastic, its loops and its spirals; but scarcely has their sequence impressed itself upon the retina than it is gone, leaving behind it nothing but a memory, vivid or faint according to the keenness of our power of receiving an impression, and to our power of retaining it.

It is this momentariness of effect that makes the arabesque suggested to the eye by the bird's flight comparable to the idea of line produced in the ear by the singing voice: whose ordered sequence of sound designs the arabesque, for, like the swallow, the voice traces the imaginary line of its path, executes its curves beautiful or fantastic; or, like the lark, can climb to the heavens and subside deliciously, its cadence falling as softly on the listening ear as 'petals of blown roses on the grass'.

Differing in this way from the drawn line that can be set before us for our leisurely contemplation, it is the movement of the sound of the voice, with nothing to mark its track save that which remains in the ear-memory, that causes the shape of a musical phrase to remain in such a degree a thing of the imagination.

Modern unaccompanied song differs to so material an extent from all types of contrapuntal music that it follows that the listener, if he is to appreciate its meaning, will listen to it in a different way: one would scarcely think of applying to so elusive a thing as an imaginary line the standards applicable to a tapestry of a thousand threads. Indeed, no method that centres itself upon the consideration of the musical thread of sound can be expected to be satisfactory, seeing that in this type of song the musical thread is primarily the vehicle to carry the poet's words. Only when considered with them can it be expected to show its true meaning; for if, in the process of re-utterance in the new medium, the poet's words have taken possession of the

supple musical phrase, the two are no longer to be considered

apart, for they will have become one, inseparable.

Listening to music is something of an art in itself. Some can hear only what they are expecting to hear; others cannot hear at all things they have heard too often. In listening to unaccompanied song, some will hear, without conscious effort, a series of underlying harmonies suggested to them by the vocal line, while to others the single line of the voice, reacting upon no such sensitive chords in the brain, will be for them none the less complete in itself than was melody to the people who listened to it before harmony was invented. Neither of these ways is the only right way, neither is wrong. Everybody has his own way of listening; but the main thing is to be quite sure that one is listening.

There is a proportion of an audience that apparently thinks that the best way of listening to a song is to plunge its face into its programme, where, with scrupulous pertinacity, it proceeds

to verify every word that the singer is singing.

In listening to unaccompanied song there is no necessity to look for the words anywhere except to the singer. The words should not be printed. The audience will then concentrate upon

what it is hearing, and hear all the better.

In this way only shall we realize the whole meaning of the sounds that are being said to us, and that are being sung to us; and it is of course the only way for us to give ourselves the chance of realizing how, all unconsciously, with a sympathetic singer,

the beauty born of murmuring sound Shall pass into her face.

In preparing, then, to listen to modern unaccompanied song, let us be sure that we are concentrating upon the poet's words as they are re-uttered in music by the composer and interpreted directly to each one of us on the lips of the singer; for otherwise we know how it may well come about that

Men may construe things after their own fashion Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.

### APPENDIX

### A LIST OF MODERN UNACCOMPANIED SONGS

FREDERIC	Austin.	A Song of Soldiers.
		Poem by Walter de la Mare.
,,	,,	Wanderers.
		Poem by Walter de la Mare.
HERBERT	BEDFORD	. Aedh wishes for the cloths of Heaven.
		Poem by W. B. Yeats.
,,	22	A corner of the garden.
	**	Lines by Malcolm Mackenzie.
,,	,,	Evangeline passes.
•		Lines by Longfellow.
? <b>)</b>	,,	If music be the food of love.
	-,	Lines from Twelfth Night, Act I, Scene i.
,,	,,	Lorenzo to Jessica.
		Lines from The Merchant of Venice, Act V, Scene i.
22	>>	Meditation among the Trees.
		Poem by Frederick William Harvey.
22	,,	Ships that pass in the night.
		Lines by Longfellow.
,,	,,	The Hay sings.
		Lines by Carmen Sylva, Translation of Alma Strettel.
>>	,,	The little boy Love.
		Verses anonymous, eighteenth century.
,,	,	The unlessoned Lover.
		Verses by Robert Herrick.
22	"	The last of the leaves on the bough.
		Lines by Carmen Sylva, Translation of Alma Strettel.
EUGENE BONNER.		Prayer to the Wind.
		Poem by Ion Swinley.
HARRY FARJEON.		Nine Tunes for a Penny Piper.
		Verses by Eleanor Farjeon.
		For a Dance. For the Wind.
		For Shadows. For Autumn.
		For a Mill Wheel. For Dreams.
		For Snow. For Easter.
		For a Tinker.
		47

### Appendix

Francesca Hall. The Dirge of Adonis.

Lines from Sappho, translated by Bliss Carman.

Jane Joseph. Deo Salvatori.
Poem by Thomas Fettiplace.

,, ,, The Invitation.

Verses Anonymous.

,, ,, Easter.

Poem by George Herbert.

,, ,, An Hymne.

Poem by Phineas Fletcher.

,, ,, Evening Hymn.

Poem by Sir Thomas Browne.

LIZA LEHMANN. The Hour of Farewell. Lines by O. H.

GEORGE OLDROYD. A Farewell.

Poem by Katharine Tynan.

Rower's Chant.

Poem by T. Sturge Moore.

CYRIL SCOTT. Lamentation.

Lines by Cyril Scott.

JOHN TOBIN. The Donkey.

Lines by G. K. Chesterton.

FELIX WHITE. Desolation.

Lines by Shelley.

,, ,, The Shepherd's Daffodil.

Verses by Michael Drayton.

,, ,, Mother, I will have a husband.

Verses from Thomas Vautour's Songs of Divers Airs and Natures (1689).

,, ,, Rosalynde's Madrigal.

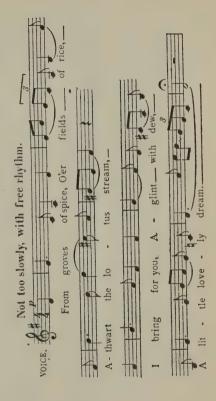
Verses from Thomas Lodge's Rosalynde.

GERRARD WILLIAMS. Indian Cradle Song.
Poem by Sarojini Naidu.

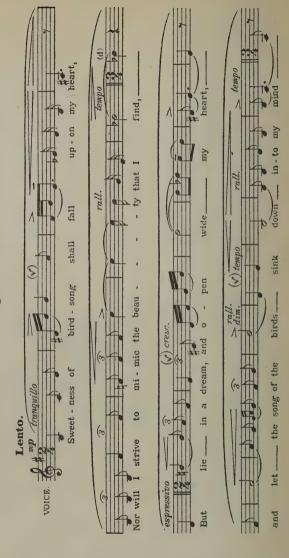
# From 'Lamentation' by Cyril Scott



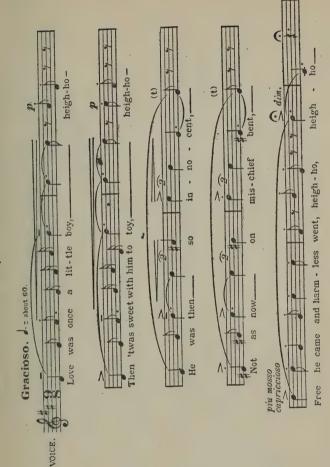
# From 'Indian Cradle Song' by Gerrard Williams



From 'Meditation among the Trees' by Herbert Bedford



From 'The Little Boy Love' by Herbert Bedford



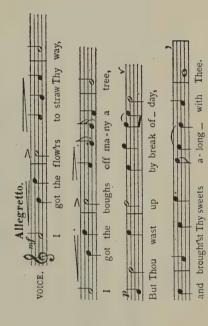
From 'A Song of Soldiers' by Frederic Austin



## From 'Desolation' by Felix White



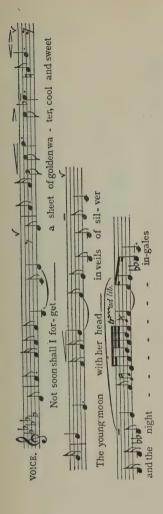
### From 'Easter' by Jane Joseph



The concluding lines of 'Evangeline Passes' by Herbert Bedford



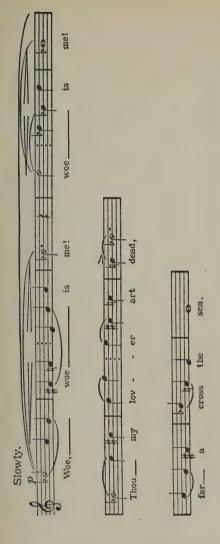
From 'A Farewell' by George Oldroyd



From 'A Song for Shadows' by Harry Farjeon



From 'The Dirge of Adonis' by Francesca Hall



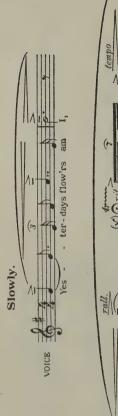
From 'Wanderers' by Frederic Austin



From 'If Music be the food of love' by Herbert Bedford



From 'The Hay Sings' by Herbert Bedford





sweet draught of

I have drunk my last

and



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